1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

these reverences are merely sketched out. In the *dé-ong* too will be kept the chests containing spare clothes and jewels.

With the exception of the altar, and of a couple of the biggest houses (those of Tafoor and Chala Mandal) which have rough coloured frescoes on the external plaster and slightly carved doorways and windows, Lepcha houses are entirely unornamented within and without. As a generalisation it may be said that the Lepchas possess neither arts nor crafts, though they show considerable dexterity in adapting natural materials to domestic uses. Lepchas are capable of becoming very efficient craftsmen; the locally done carpentry work in the monastery is as good as could be desired; but such useless decoration is for them entirely pointless, an alien craft to be learned from aliens at the command and expense of the state. Datoop, a master carpenter, who had studied the craft for nine years and who had done the fine work in most of the monasteries of the neighbourhood, had not a single piece of carved wood in his house.

Painting is an even more alien art, confined exclusively to specially trained lamas. The only painter in the neighbourhood was the Lharibu (painter) Chujen of Panung, the father-in-law of Tafoor, and he had had to give up the practice of the craft with increasing years and failing eyesight. He started with a natural propensity for drawing, which was noted by his lamaist instructor, who advised him to learn to become a painter. He studied for nine years at the monastery of Pensong. The method of instruction was the following. The pupils were provided with a piece of oiled wood covered with black earth, on which was placed a thin layer of white powder; when this was scratched with a pointed stick a black outline drawing resulted, which could be wiped out so that the board could be used again. The teacher would draw a model and the pupils would copy that for some days, only going on to the next model when the first was copied perfectly. Thus the first five or six days were occupied with the head of the God Chum-den-dé; then nine or ten days were occupied in learning to draw this God's body naked; then the body draped; and finally the whole figure coloured. In this mechanical way a whole repertoire of sacred pictures were learned during the nine years' teaching, and the Lharibu later learned others by copying existing models.

According to the Lharibu's view of art, all pictures are approximations to a divine original, varying in merit chiefly by their nearness to this ideal, but also partly through the fineness and

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

of the other stories, I have decided to include him: also he is the only artist in the district. Sixty-six years of age, he was bow-legged and almost a dwarf, and had a deep incised scar running the length of his forehead. He had come by this in the days of his youth, having fallen down one night on his way home from a party. He looked like a benevolent gnome. The word Hlaribu, which is Tibetan, really means a "maker of gods, or images," but is in general use for all people who are engaged in any sort of artistic work, from wood-carving to painting pictures on cloth. When the Hlaribu was about fourteen he was helping to repair the Talung monastery. At that time he was still learning to become a Lama; and when his teacher saw his work he advised him to become an artist. Shortly after this he went to the big monastery at Phensang, which is famous in Sikkim for the artistic work of its monks. He stayed there for nine years. When he set off he took with him a load of *chi*, a ceremonial scarf, and one rupee; these he laid at the feet of his teacher. On finishing his course he gave him twenty rupees, a pig, and a big copper vessel. The Hlaribu does not believe there is such a thing as individual skill in painting. He says that having completed the course he was as good as, and neither better nor worse than anyone else. Before he had any lessons he used to amuse himself by drawing birds and men on odd scraps of paper. He has now no preference with regard to the subjects he paints and only works to order, never for his own pleasure or amusement; he has not even troubled to decorate his own house.

When he first started to learn he was made to draw on a wooden board, which was covered with a thick layer of earth, oiled and powdered. The actual drawing was done with a wooden stylo, and being only for practice, was erased as soon as finished. He was first made to copy the heads of gods. After five or six days he became proficient at this, and was then made to copy cross-legged figures of naked gods. This took a further ten days. The next stage was to draw clothed figures, which, owing to their drapery, he found much more

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

difficult. Now came the figure of the god Chumden-De. This is always the first god that a pupil learns to draw; not because it is considered particularly easy, but because it was the first to be incarnated. His drawing of Chumden-De was coloured, but there is no formal instruction in painting, since it consists in merely filling in spaces with solid colour, no attempt being made to suggest the play of light and shade. During the early stage he was never allowed to draw without a copy, but by the time he finished he had made so many drawings of the various members of the Lamaist pantheon that he was able to draw them from memory without a mistake. His course finished with the painting of a picture known as Jimbong-Ngernga, a complicated group of twenty-five gods, one of which had no less than sixteen hands and legs, not to mention its eight ungainly heads. This, he said, was very difficult, and he has now forgotten how to draw it. During his nine years at Phensang the Hlaribu learnt the details of several hundred gods: he can no longer remember all of these, but by reference to a book is still able to produce any particular one for which he may be asked. He might almost be described as an "Academician" in outlook; for he does not believe in introducing any sort of individuality into his pictures, and thinks it best to stick to the rules. He does not admit the possibility of difference in two pictures of the same subject if painted by two different artists: since the subject is the same one cannot be better than the other. He thinks, however, that paintings made in Tibet are better than those from Sikkim, since the tradition came originally from the former country. In Tibet it is usual for an artist to devote his whole life to the craft, whereas here in Sikkim it is merely a side line. In addition to making pictures the Hlaribu was also taught to do wood-carving, but not to make images, which are usually imported from either Tibet or Bhutan. Carving is almost entirely confined to decorating the mouldings of windows and doors. This is afterwards picked out in colour, usually in a combination of red, blue, and green. The colours are generally crude and violently contrasted,

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

but the general effect in the gloomy rooms of a semi-darkened monastery is often not unpleasing.

Apart from its actual built-in decoration every monastery has a few hanging wall-pictures, or *Thang-Ka* as they are called. These are generally painted on canvas or cotton, which is first prepared by stretching it while damp over a wooden frame, from which it is detached when completed. The mounted Tibetan painting generally has a tricoloured silk border, usually of red, yellow and blue. According to Waddell this "is alleged to represent the spectrum colours of the rainbow, which separates sacred objects from the material world. The outer border of blue is broader than the others, and broadest at its lowest border, where it is usually divided by a vertical patch of brocade embroidered with the dragons of the sky. A veil is invariably added as a protection against the grimy smoke of incense, lamps and dust. The veil is of flimsy silk, often adorned with sacred symbols, and it is hooked up when the picture is exhibited." There were several such pictures in our room at Lingtem, but all were of very inferior quality, and in no way to be compared with some of the really beautiful works of art one often sees in Tibetan monasteries.

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I started this chapter with an account of the local Church's leader, and it seems fitting to close it with a few details about the head of the civil administration. Chala Mandal is fifty-nine, but like most Lepchas does not look his age, and would never believe that he was nearly twenty years my senior. He has been ill for several weeks, and does not often leave his house. It was divined that his trouble comes from Subdok Mung. It appears that the Mandal's first wife was a Mun, and that when she died her body, instead of being buried, was cremated, a rite that is usually accorded only to members of the Church. The burial ceremonies were carried out by Lamas, no Mun, which was not in accordance with custom, being present. For this reason her soul was angry, and

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

boy and girl concerned. The children are, however, consulted and are never forced to marry against their will; but at this age they do not seem to have any very strong likes or dislikes, and seem usually willing to marry anyone whom their parents suggest. I do not think the question of love ever arises, and am personally doubtful whether such a state of mind is known to the Lepcha; but the reasons for this will be more fully discussed in the following chapter. There is a tendency, however, for boys who go away from home to work to insist on choosing their own partners, and to delay their marriage until a somewhat later age than the normal. There are, of course, not many such; but under the feudal system prevailing each village has, according to the size of its population, to provide a boy or two either for service in the Palace at Gangtok or for training in the State Carpentry School. These boys are usually away from home between, roughly, the ages of twelve and twenty, but some prefer to stay on. They seem to find it a little difficult to fit into the scheme of village life when they first return, but in Lingtem there was no apparent case of a boy being permanently maladjusted on this account. They settle down quite comfortably after the first few months and are probably better, in the long run, for the additional experience. Most of them learn to speak Nepali, and one or two can read and write a little. The system has much to commend it, and enables the Maharaja to keep in personal touch with his tenants. This would otherwise be impossible, since a personal visit to Jongu, Lepcha hospitality being what it is, would be too much of a drain on the district's resources. This His Highness fully realises, and wisely keeps away.

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